

Municipal Court Judges

Department Description

The Franklin County Municipal Court is established pursuant to section 1901.01 of the Ohio Revised Code and traces its origin to the creation of the Columbus Municipal Court in 1916. The geographic jurisdiction of the Court is all of Franklin County and those portions of the City of Columbus that extend beyond the boundaries of Franklin County.

The Court has fourteen judges in the General Division and one judge in the Environmental Division. Judges serve six-year terms, unless appointed or elected to fill a vacancy. Annually, they elect one of their peers to serve as the Administrative and Presiding Judge.

The judges preside over civil, criminal, and traffic cases and conduct both jury and non-jury trials. In jury trials, judges interpret the law and the jury determines factual matters. In non-jury trials, by far the more common, judges have the dual role of interpreting the law and determining the facts. The judges also conduct criminal arraignments and preliminary hearings on felony cases, set bond on criminal charges, issue search warrants, and impose sentence when a defendant is found guilty of a traffic or criminal charge. The judges hear civil cases where the amount in controversy is \$15,000 or less, and cases that are transferred from the Small Claims Division to the regular docket of the Court.

The jurisdiction and powers of the Environmental Division differ from those of the General Division in several important respects. The Environmental Division has exclusive jurisdiction to enforce local codes and regulations affecting real property, such as fire and building codes. The Environmental Division has injunctive powers, and there is no monetary limit on the cases that fall within the Environmental Division's exclusive jurisdiction.

Each week, a different judge is assigned to the Duty Session to handle a variety of responsibilities, which include applications for search warrants, motions to dismiss filed by the prosecutor, cognovit notes, motions to excuse jurors, probable cause hearings, motions for default judgments filed in unassigned cases, and performing civil wedding ceremonies.

The court administrator is the chief non-judicial officer and reports only to the judges of the court, primarily through the administrative and presiding judge. The court administrator is responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures, and directs and supervises all administrative and operational Court functions, which includes the following areas: budget and finance, purchasing, facilities, security, human resources, magistrates, jury, case assignment, probation services, service bailiffs, small claims, court reporters, interpreters, vehicle immobilization, court-appointed counsel, and court investigation.

Department Mission

Judiciary - To safeguard the constitutional rights of all citizens and to provide equal access to all; professional, fair, and impartial treatment; timely disposition of cases without unnecessary delay; and a just resolution of all court matters.

Administration - The mission of the employees is to implement the policies and procedures established by the judiciary and the legislature in a professional and dedicated manner, and to ensure accessibility, fairness, accountability, and courtesy in the administration of justice.

Strategic Priorities for 2009

- Enhance and increase human resources functions, including preparation and release of an employee policy and procedures manual; increased emphasis on employee training programs; a new personnel filing system; and improve recruitment, screening, and hiring procedures.
- Evaluate the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of audio recording equipment installed in magistrate courtrooms in 2007.
- Increase usage of the new electronic monitored home confinement program in the Department of Probation Services that was introduced in 2007.
- Seek ways to address the ever-increasing challenge of providing interpretation and translation services to the growing number of those who have business with the Court for whom English is not their primary language.
- Prepare and issue bids and award new contracts for forensic psychological examinations, security services, interpreter services, and court reporting services.
- Develop methods and forms to create detailed periodic financial reports so that hiring and purchasing decisions can be more accurately made.
- Formalize a work group to explore ways to improve the Court's mail service.
- Work with the city's Facilities Management Division and organize a users committee to develop priorities, plans, and schedules for Courthouse repairs and renovations.
- Undertake limited remodeling to enhance the Duty Room, create a small meeting space, and provide several new office spaces.
- Provide increased training for financial and administrative staff on budgeting, bidding, and purchasing.
- Begin preparation of a Request for Qualifications seeking potential vendors to perform salary survey and update the Court's job classifications and salary ranges, if it appears that funding for the work will be available in 2009 or 2010.
- Begin preparation of a Request for Qualifications seeking potential vendors to engage in a complete review of Court structure and operations, if it appears that funding for the review will be available in 2009 or 2010.

2009 Budget Notes

- Court costs and fees fund core Court functions that would otherwise require general fund support. The security fund, which is budgeted at \$1,690,251, pays for all Court security, including a 20-person security department, contracted evening and weekend services, and equipment. The Court's computer fund is budgeted at \$598,893 and pays the salaries of legal research staff and all technology needs.
- Funding of \$207,397 is included for the home incarceration program, which provides a cost effective option to incarceration of offenders who do not pose a threat to public safety.
- Fees for professional services continue to be a significant cost and efforts must be ongoing to monitor those expenses. These include fees for court-appointed counsel (\$130,000), foreign language interpreters (\$125,000), interpreters for the deaf (\$25,000) and forensic psychological examinations (\$74,000).

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Budget and Program Summary

| DEPARTMENT FINANCIAL SUMMARY | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| DIVISION SUMMARY | 2006 Actual | 2007 Actual | 2008 Original Appropriation | 2008 Estimated Expenditures | 2009 Proposed |
| Municipal Court Judges | \$ 13,088,546 | \$ 13,517,980 | \$ 14,505,291 | \$ 14,473,741 | \$ 14,997,883 |
| TOTAL | \$ 13,088,546 | \$ 13,517,980 | \$ 14,505,291 | \$ 14,473,741 | \$ 14,997,883 |

NOTE: The general fund 2008 and 2009 figures, unlike in preceding years, do not include technology expenditures, which are budgeted in Finance and Management. For an adjusted historical comparison, see page 26-9

| DEPARTMENT SUMMARY BY CHARACTER | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| MUNICIPAL CT JUDGES GENERAL FUND | 2006 Actual | 2007 Actual | 2008 Original Appropriation | 2008 Estimated Expenditures | 2009 Proposed |
| Personnel | \$ 11,241,269 | \$ 12,003,553 | \$ 12,821,821 | \$ 12,859,441 | \$ 13,292,345 |
| Materials & Supplies | 133,996 | 60,803 | 32,550 | 32,385 | 37,600 |
| Services | 1,234,801 | 984,108 | 1,042,864 | 1,003,596 | 1,069,045 |
| Other | - | 7,500 | - | - | - |
| Transfer | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL | \$ 12,610,066 | \$ 13,055,964 | \$ 13,897,235 | \$ 13,895,422 | \$ 14,398,990 |
| MUNICIPAL CT JUDGES COMPUTER FUND | 2006 Actual | 2007 Actual | 2008 Original Appropriation | 2008 Estimated Expenditures | 2009 Proposed |
| Personnel | \$ 160,945 | \$ 205,276 | \$ 243,406 | \$ 241,515 | \$ 257,388 |
| Materials & Supplies | 154,700 | 44,931 | 93,200 | 91,827 | 113,700 |
| Services | 162,835 | 211,809 | 271,450 | 244,977 | 227,805 |
| TOTAL | \$ 478,480 | \$ 462,016 | \$ 608,056 | \$ 578,319 | \$ 598,893 |

| DEPARTMENT SUMMARY BY FUND | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| FUND SUMMARY | 2006 Actual | 2007 Actual | 2008 Original Appropriation | 2008 Estimated Expenditures | 2009 Proposed |
| General | \$ 12,610,066 | \$ 13,055,964 | \$ 13,897,235 | \$ 13,895,422 | \$ 14,398,990 |
| Municipal Court Computer Fund | 478,480 | 462,016 | 608,056 | 578,319 | 598,893 |
| TOTAL | \$ 13,088,546 | \$ 13,517,980 | \$ 14,505,291 | \$ 14,473,741 | \$ 14,997,883 |

| DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL SUMMARY | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| DIVISION | FT/PT | 2006 Actual | 2007 Actual | 2008 Authorized | 2009 Authorized |
| General Fund | FT | 178 | 180 | 184 | 184 |
| | PT | 8 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Computer Fund | FT | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| | PT | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 191 | 193 | 198 | 200 |
| *FT=Full-Time PT=Part-Time | | | | | |

Municipal Court Judges

2009 Operating Budget Municipal Court Judges

| Program | Mission | Financial History by Program | | | | Personnel by Program | | | |
|----------------|--|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | 2006 Budget | 2007 Budget | 2008 Budget | 2009 Proposed | 2006 FTEs | 2007 FTEs | 2008 FTEs | 2009 FTEs |
| Administration | To carry out non-judicial policies of the court including personnel management; fiscal management; purchasing; appointment of counsel for indigent defendants; liaison with other courts, governmental entities and private agencies; public information and report management; settlement week; secretarial services; and appointment of interpreters and security management. | \$ 4,412,776 | \$ 4,588,953 | \$ 4,252,380 | \$ 4,581,926 | 45 | 50 | 50 | 51 |
| Assignment | To control case flow management by making individual case assignments to judges; to prepare individual judges' and magistrates' court sheets and broadsheets; to notify plaintiffs, defendants, prosecutors, attorneys and suburban solicitors of all court hearings; to schedule and maintain an up-to-date status of all active cases assigned to the judges and magistrates; and process all motions and pleadings. | \$ 772,380 | \$ 776,702 | \$ 848,688 | \$ 890,323 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 15 |

**2009 Operating Budget
Municipal Court Judges**

Financial History by Program

Personnel by Program

| Program | Mission | 2006 Budget | 2007 Budget | 2008 Budget | 2009 Proposed | 2006 FTEs | 2007 FTEs | 2008 FTEs | 2009 FTEs |
|--------------------|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Service Bailiffs | To assist litigants and attorneys by efficiently handling and delivering court documents and the timely enforcement of judgment remedies. | \$ 1,077,779 | \$ 1,159,501 | \$ 1,210,626 | \$ 1,239,449 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| Courtroom Bailiffs | To coordinate activities in the courtrooms of judges and magistrates including scheduling cases and providing information to the public regarding the status of pending cases. | \$ 1,580,594 | \$ 1,312,530 | \$ 1,380,956 | \$ 1,423,899 | 22 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| Probation | To provide administration, regular supervision, non-reporting probation, domestic violence program, chemical abuse program, multiple OMVI offender program, sex offender program, investigation services, community service program, restitution program and no convictions program. | \$ 3,425,144 | \$ 3,539,112 | \$ 3,948,649 | \$ 3,921,968 | 56 | 56 | 56 | 57 |

Municipal Court Judges

2009 Operating Budget Municipal Court Judges

Financial History by Program

Personnel by Program

| Program | Mission | 2006 Budget | 2007 Budget | 2008 Budget | 2009 Proposed | 2006 FTEs | 2007 FTEs | 2008 FTEs | 2009 FTEs |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Small Claims | To provide citizens with a simplified procedure for bringing civil suits for sums of \$3,000 or less by providing forms and assistance to individuals wishing to file claims, motions and writs of execution. | \$ 305,887 | \$ 305,187 | \$ 333,120 | \$ 365,864 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Court Reporters | To provide a verbatim record of all court proceedings, to read back any and all portions of court proceedings, to prepare verbatim transcripts of court proceedings and to maintain records on court exhibits. | \$ 1,005,718 | \$ 1,079,227 | \$ 1,178,274 | \$ 1,202,918 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| Jury Office | To summon citizens to serve as jurors, randomly select jurors for panels, postpone and reschedule jury service, and maintain information on prospective jurors. | \$ 384,594 | \$ 425,902 | \$ 417,858 | \$ 425,434 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Home Incarceration/ Work Release | To provide a cost-effective alternative sentencing option to traditional jail incarceration, consistent with public safety. To provide for the court's acquisition of software, technology-related equipment, internal technology billings and on-line services. | \$ 295,000 | \$ 411,424 | \$ 198,695 | \$ 207,397 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

**2009 Operating Budget
Municipal Court Judges**

| Program | Mission | <u>Financial History by Program</u> | | | | <u>Personnel by Program</u> | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | 2006 Budget | 2007 Budget | 2008 Budget | 2009 Proposed | 2006 FTEs | 2007 FTEs | 2008 FTEs | 2009 FTEs |
| Mental Health Program Docket | To provide a cost-effective alternative sentencing option to traditional jail incarceration for prisoners with mental illnesses. | \$ - | \$ 121,828 | \$ 127,989 | \$ 139,812 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Computer Services | To research and prepare memoranda of issues pending before the court; maintain the law library; review new case law to ensure the court's compliance with the decisions; review pending legislation that may affect the court; advise the judges and employees regarding new legal developments and applications of current law to court procedures; and update local court rules. | \$ 580,313 | \$ 540,912 | \$ 608,056 | \$ 598,893 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| | | \$ 13,840,185 | \$ 14,261,278 | \$ 14,505,291 | \$ 14,997,883 | 181 | 183 | 183 | 187 |

NOTE: The general fund 2008 and 2009 budget figures, unlike in preceding years, do not include technology expenditures, which are budgeted in Finance and Management. For an adjusted historical comparison, see page 26-9. Some program data will not match department summary data due to differences in data being reported (i.e., budgeted versus actual). This is compounded in cases of departmental reorganizations during the timeframe.

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